

REMARKS

The present invention defined in the main claim 18 is as follows:

A finishing agent for producing artificial flowers from natural plants with keeping the natural states of the plants, the finishing agent which consists of a solvent containing:

- a) a lower alcohol of C1-C3; and
- b) at least one of glycol ethers in a weight ratio of 1-99:99-1.

The present invention is characterized by using at least one glycol ether together with a lower alcohol in the finishing agent. As a result, unexpected advantages of the present invention are obtained.

For example, aquatic plants, such as East Indian Lotus, etc., have never been able to be preserved as artificial flowers by conventional methods. But, according to the present invention, such plants can be preserved and displayed as flexible artificial flowers of natural appearances. Further, "Someiyoshino" (a cherry blossom) having extremely thin petals from which the color and the finishing agent are easily lost, has now been able for the first time to be prepared as an artificial flower with use of the finishing agent of the present invention.

Each of the cited references does not teach any use of glycol ethers.

The references of Japanese Patent No. 2001-233702-A to Fuji and Japanese Patent No. 2004-099605-A to Sakamoto were cited in the International Search Report of International Application No. PCT/JP2004/010051.

In the International Preliminary Examination Report, it was judged that claims 1, 3-9 of the amendment submitted under PCT Article 34 which correspond to claims 18-25 in the present

application are *not* disclosed in each of the cited references and are not obvious to those skilled in the art, and accordingly, have novelty and an inventive step.

U.S. Patent No. 2,658,836 to Fessenden discloses a process for preserving naturally colored plant and animal tissues, but the used solution contains essentially a volatile water-dissolving monohydric alcohol, thiourea and sodium sulfite;

essentially a volatile water-dissolving monohydric alcohol, thiourea and sodium metabisulfite;

essentially a volatile water-dissolving monohydric alcohol, thiourea and sodium nitrite;

essentially a volatile water-dissolving monohydric alcohol, thiourea and sodium hydrosulfite;

essentially a volatile water-dissolving monohydric alcohol, thiourea and potassium hypophosphite;

essentially a volatile water-dissolving monohydric alcohol, thiourea and an oxygen absorbing reducing agent;

essentially a volatile water-dissolving monohydric alcohol, an aldehyde and an oxygen absorbing reducing agent;

essentially a volatile water-dissolving monohydric alcohol and sodium sulfoxylate formaldehyde;

essentially a volatile water-dissolving monohydric alcohol and zinc sulfoxylate formaldehyde;

essentially a volatile water-dissolving monohydric alcohol and sodium sulfoxylate acetaldehyde; or

essentially a volatile water-dissolving monohydric alcohol and zinc sulfoxylate acetaldehyde.

Hence, Fessenden does not disclose any use of glycol ethers, and does not teach any of the features and remarkable advantages of the present invention.

In summary, the present invention as defined in claims 18-23 are remarkably distinguished from the cited references and patentable.

Meanwhile, the corresponding Japanese Patent Application has been patented as Japanese Patent No. 3,813,165 in which the allowed claims 1-6 and 9 are identical to the claims 18-23 of the present application.

Wherefore, an early action on the merits is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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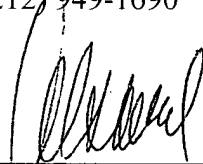
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